

Best Way to Introduce Teachings?

Post by “Daniel Van Orman” of March 15, 2019 at 5:50 PM

Outlining

Fitting categories into Canon, Physics, and Ethics is an excellent idea! Thank you.

If we could summarize those three categories and continue with summaries and links to the categories within them.

Thanks for the advice and links. I need to find the time to go through all of that material (and more). 😊

I definitely don't know enough to summarize those categories, but hopefully the idea and/or task will benefit others.

Differences between Epicureanism and Utilitarianism

I thought Epicureanism was hedonistic.

It talks about pleasures and pains, but I guess it never fully encapsulates hedonism.

No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.

[Principal Doctrines](#), 8 ; Vatican Sayings, 50

All desires that do not lead to pain when they remain unsatisfied are unnecessary...

[Principal Doctrines](#), 26

I see philosophers frequently call Epicureanism hedonistic. For example, Henry Sidgwick refers to Epicureanism as "egoistic hedonism" (while utilitarianism is "universalistic hedonism"). Are these philosophers oversimplifying or misspeaking?

I thought Epicureanism emphasized a moral responsibility to make one's self happy:

So we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed towards attaining it.

Letter to Menoecus

My interpretation of PD5 (which may be wrong) is it is an example of Epicureanism promoting consequentialism. A natural consequence of not living prudently, honorably, and justly is to not live pleasantly. I don't see how PD5 talks about responsibility - just how it gives a very important lesson.

Moral Responsibility

In utilitarianism, the "force" driving the principle of maximal utility is education and sentiments:

education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole

John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 2

moral associations which are wholly of artificial creation, when intellectual culture goes on, yield by degrees to the dissolving force of analysis: and if the feeling of duty, when associated with utility, would appear equally arbitrary; if there were no leading department of our nature, no powerful class of sentiments, with which that association would harmonise, which would make us feel it congenial, and incline us not only to foster it in others (for which we have abundant interested motives), but also to cherish it in ourselves; if there were not, in short, a natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality, it might well happen that this association also, even after it had been implanted by education, might be analysed away

John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 3

[Cassius](#) I assume, you are going to criticize enforcing ethical beliefs using "education and opinion". 😊 Before you do, see my opinion on emotion driving moral responsibility below and know the "force" I mention next applies to utilitarianism.

The "force" I thought was driving moral responsibility in Epicureanism was hedonism and natural consequences:

[Happiness] has not, by this alone, proved itself to be the sole criterion [of morality]. To do that, it would seem, by the same rule, necessary to show, not only that people desire happiness, but that they never desire anything else. Now it is palpable that they do desire things which, in common language, are decidedly distinguished from happiness. They desire, for example, virtue, and the absence of vice, no less really than pleasure and the absence of pain

John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 4

During all [the existence of humanity], mankind [has] been learning by experience the tendencies of actions; on which experience all the prudence, as well as all the morality of life,

are dependent.

John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 2

Personally, I believe moral responsibility is driven by emotion. The "forces" I mentioned above simply drive or manipulate emotion.

I focus heavily on ethics - believing it to be the most important part of philosophy. That's just my opinion, though.

There are plenty of non-ethical or practical parts of utilitarianism. Impartiality helps one to become "the man who best knows how to meet external threats[, who] makes into one family all the creatures he can" ([PD39](#)). Commensurability helps one make better choices, as such to "pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them" (Letter to Menoecus).

Thanks for the conversations, guys. This has been great for my learning and understanding of Epicureanism. 😊